THE
Mutual Duties
OF
Elders and People.

Delivered in a

DISCOURSE
AT
Beckles in *Suffolk*, *Octob.* 13. 1697.

At the setting apart of Mr. *John Killinghal*, to the Office of an Elder, over a Church of *Christ* there.

By *John Stackhouse*, Elder of a *Church* of *Christ* in *NORWICH.*

LONDON,
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To the READDR.

THis Sermon was preached upon a ſpecial occaſion, at the ſetting apart of an Elder over a Church of Chriſt; *the Elders of the Churches, and the People there preſent,* did earneſtly deſire our Reverend Brother to print his Sermon, they were ſo affected with it; and ſo they might well be: The Sermon is ſo *Judicious, ſo Quick, and Powerful,* that I hope the Lord will make it of great Uſe to many.

Here you have *the Duties of Miniſters and People,* ſet forth ſo excellently, and fully, that thoſe that read this Sermon will ſee, That this Servant of Chriſt is *mightily in the Scriptures, an able Miniſter of the New Teſtament, and full of the Knowledge of the Lord.*

When I read over this Sermon as it was written, by one that took it in Short-Hand, I encouraged the Author all that I could, to ſatisfie the Deſires of thoſe that were ſo earneſt for the printing of it. I have often in publick and in private praiſed God for the Grace and Gifts beſtowed, upon this Reverend Brother; and now that *I am old, and under ſuch great Pains, walking in the Valley of the Shadow of Death,* it is a great ſatisfaction to me, to leave this Church of Chriſt with one ſo able, and faithful to take Care of them. The Lord continue his Life, and Strength, pour out of his Spirit upon him more and more; and grant that the Congregation may *eſteem him highly for his Works ſake; and be at Peace amongſt themſelves;* which is my hearts Deſire, and Prayer of,

Decemb. 27. 1697.

Martin Fynch.

To my Dear and Reverend Brethren, in the Work of the Goſpel, who deſired the Printing of this Sermon.

WHether you may like this Sermon in reading it, as well as you did in hearing it, I (who am conſcious of the meanneſs of it) ſhould greatly doubt, if I were not well ſatisfied concerning your Love and Candour. My deſign and deſire was therein (as it is in all my weak Labours) to profit, more than to pleaſe; and the profit of many was, I believe, your aim and hope in preſſing me to the Publication thereof; I have therefore yielded, that your Requeſt ſhould over-rule my own Averſneſs to the Preſs.

The Text diſcours'd on led me to ſpeak of ſo many ſeveral Particulars, that they could not be fully diſcuſſed by me in one Diſcourſe, (tho' long enough for the Occaſion.) What I have briefly hinted to explain, how Elders are over the Church, I have read more largely declared, in the Writings of Dr. Owen, Dr. Goodwin, and others, (as I ſuppoſe you alſo have) where ſuch as deſire more full ſatisfaction, concerning that, or other Points, may find it; I follow them ſo far, as I underſtand they follow the Word of God, the only infallible Rule. Now that the Father of Lights, and the God of all Grace, would teach Us, and the ſeveral Churches of Chriſt, over which he hath ſet us, ſo to walk, as is here plainly declared; and much more abundantly, according to his Holy Word; and that he would ſtrengthen our Hands in his great Work, againſt all Diſcouragements, and that the Word of the Goſpel may greatly prevail, and that this mean Diſcourſe may be ſomewhat ſubſervient thereunto, is the earneſt Prayer of,

Dear and Reverend Brethren,

Your Brother and Companion, in the Kingdom and Patience of Jeſus Chriſt,

(though moſt unworthy,)

J. STACKHOUSE.

Norwich, Dec. 17. 1697.

The Mutual Duties of Elders and People.

1 Theſſal. V. 12, 13.

And we beſeech you, Brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admoniſh you; and to eſteem them very highly in Love for their Works ſake. And be at Peace among your ſelves.

THE Exhortation is very ſuitable, and ſeaſonable for you now; and, Oh! that the Spirit of God would ſet it home upon your Hearts; the Light of the Spirit is a more powerful Teaching, than the Words of a poor Worm.

Above other places it pleaſed God that the Goſpel preached had a very ſudden and great ſucceſs at *Theſſalonica, a chief City in Macedonia*: You read in *Acts* 17. That *Paul* Preaching to them *three Sabbath days, ſome* Jews, *and many* Greeks, *and devout Women, not a few*, were converted: And a Church was gathered, (for ſo he directs both theſe Epiſtles, *Unto the Church of the Theſſalonians,*) and Officers were ſet over them, as appears from the Text. And becauſe they *received the Word of God with much affliction*, the Apoſtle was very ſolicitous for them, and he ſent *Timothy* from *Athens*, that he *might eſtabliſh them, and comfort them*, that they might *not be moved by their afflictions*, Chap. 3. ver. 2, 3. And upon *Timothy*'s return, he wrote from *Corinth* this firſt Epiſtle, and afterwards the ſecond Epiſtle, and all within the compaſs of the firſt Year of his Preaching to them. Having in this Epiſtle declared the Truths of the Goſpel to them, and variouſly inſtructed them, he comes to exhort them to thoſe Duties, that might

Chap. 1. v. 6.

might make their Communion comfortable and edifying, *Chap.* 5. *v.* 11. *Wherefore comfort your ſelves together, and edifie one another, even as alſo ye do:* He would have them to conſider thoſe comfortable Truths, and to obſerve thoſe holy Precepts which he had laid down in this Epiſtle, and ſo to comfort and edifie one another; and he urgeth it, and encourageth them thereunto, by commending them, that already they did ſo practiſe, and that therefore they ought to abound yet more and more. All Exhortation doth not imply a Reproof, as if People did not do what they are exhorted to, but that they ſhould yet abound more and more.

Hereunto he adds in the Text, an Exhortation to theſe neceſſary Duties that they owed tō them that were *over them*, their Paſtors or Teachers; for howſoever careful they might be in the diſcharge of thoſe Chriſtian Duties of *mutual Exhortation and Comfort*, yet they muſt not think their Miniſters needleſs. Brethren are to watch over one another, and exhort and comfort one another *in a way of Love*; but Elders do it *in the Authority of Chriſt*, as ſent by him; and as you may expect God's gracious Bleſſing upon your admoniſhing, and comforting one another, ſo *much more* may you expect it from the Miniſtry of them that are ſet over you, *Heb.* 10. 24, 25. *Let us conſider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works*; this is the Duty of every particular Member of the Church; but then it follows, *not forſaking the aſſembling of your ſelves together.* Every Servant muſt watch over one another, that nothing be done contrary to the Maſter's Will and Intereſt; but the chief Steward does it with Authority. Chriſt will not have his Children fed only with uncertain and ſlender Supplies, from their Brethren, to whom he doth vouchſafe Spiritual Gifts; which, as there is occaſion, they muſt make manifeſt for the profiting of others; but he doth alſo appoint ſuch as ſhould give every one their portion of Meat in due ſeaſon; that ſhall preach the Word in ſeaſon, and out of ſeaſon; that ſhall give themſelves wholly to thoſe Things, and make it their main Buſineſs whilſt they live. Chriſtian love and faithfulneſs in exhorting one another, ſhould help forward the Work of the Miniſters, and not tempt any to deſpiſe them that are ſet over them, as uſeleſs. So much for the Connexion, it being joined by the copulative Particle, *and*.

In

In the Text obſerve, *Firſt*, A loving and earneſt Compellation, *we beſeech you Brethren*; and oh that we could at this time ſo beſeech you, as that we might prevail.

Secondly, You have a deſcription of the Perſons, to whom the Duties, mentioned in the Text, are to be performed.

1. They are deſcribed from their Work, *they labour among you, they labour in the Word and Doctrine* chiefly. So in 1 *Tim.* 5. 17. *They labour among you.* The Greek may be rendred *in you*; they labour in you, as a Builder labours in the Houſe that he buildeth, they labour *in your Hearts and Souls.* That (Beloved) is our deſire, and the end of all our Labour, to make ſuitable impreſſions of the Word of God upon your Souls, by the power of the Spirit accompanying our Labours, that we might be able to ſay as the Apoſtle does, 1 *Cor.* 9. 1. *Ye are our Work in the Lord.* "Εν ὑμῖν.

2. You have their Dignity: They are ſet *over you*; that is, *To rule you*, and govern you, προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν, *ſuch as ſtand before you*, (that is the firſt ſignification of the word) *ſuch as do excel you*, or *that rule you.* So the word is rendred, 1 *Tim.* 3. 4, 5. *One that* Ruleth *well his own Houſe, having his Children in ſubjection with all gravity*; *for if a Man know not how* to Rule *his own Houſe, how ſhall he take care of the Church of God?* The ſame word, in both Verſes, is rendred *to Rule*, which in the Text is rendred by *being over.* Tho' it is not ſo abſolute a Rule, as the Rule of a Father is in his Family, yet it does import ſomewhat of ordering and governing; *he that knows not how to rule his own Houſe, how ſhall he take care of the Church of God?* The Elder is not a mute Perſon in the Church of God; but as a Father hath more to do to order his Family, than any other perſon hath in the Family, ſo the Elder hath more to do to order the Church, than any private Brother hath.

And unto this the Apoſtle doth ſubjoin a limitation, it is *in the Lord*; it is not a Civil Dominion, but it is a Spiritual Rule, it is *according to the Lord's Inſtitution and Laws*, it is *in his Name and Authority, and it is for his Glory only*; it is in the Things that belong to Religion, and the Worſhip of the Lord.

Thirdly, Theſe Perſons are deſcribed from one ſpecial inſtance of their Work, *they admoniſh you.*

The

The third Particular is the Duty of the People to their Miniſters; and the manner of propoſing it, doth carry great enforcement to it; they to whom theſe Duties are to be performed, being ſo deſcribed as before, there is great Evidence that thoſe Duties muſt be performed to them.

I. They muſt know them: Now to know doth ſignifie more than barely the being acquainted with them, and giving them an opportunity of being acquainted with you, (tho' ſome Church-Members are very much guilty of neglecting that) and it implies more than barely to know their Gifts; for, according to the *Hebrew* Phraſe, words of Sence do connote the Affections and the Effects thereof: As not knowing ſignifies neglecting, as it was ſpoken to Chriſt, in *Iſaiah* 55. 5. *Thou ſhalt call a Nation that thou knoweſt not*, whom thou hadſt neglected for ſo many Ages. *Acts* 14. 16. and 17. 30. as the poor *Gentiles* were neglected. So,

1. Knowing doth ſignifie, Firſt, *acknowledging them* to be *ſuch as they are, and ſhould be accounted by you to be.* So 1 *Cor.* 16. 18. *Acknowledge ye them that are ſuch*; acknowledge them, *own them. I will not know a wicked perſon*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *Pſalm* 101. 4. He explains it in the 6th Verſe; *He ſhall not ſtay within my Houſe*, I will not own him for my Servant. *There aroſe a King in* Iſrael *that knew not* Joſeph; ſurely *Joſeph*, and his Benefits that he had procured to *Egypt*, and the Kings thereof, could not be forgotten in fifty Years time; but he would not own that he was any way obliged to the Memory of *Joſeph*, to ſhew Kindneſs to his Poſterity, and Kindred; but he uſed them cruelly: Thus alſo I underſtand that in *Acts* 23. 5. *I knew him not to be God's high prieſt*; I did not own him, and acknowledge him, to be God's High-Prieſt, he being but a baſe Intruder, and the Office it ſelf being determined by the Sacrifice of our great High-Prieſt Jeſus Chriſt, who hath accompliſhed all that was tipified by that Office, which was now become nothing but a matter of Traffick for Gain, and worldly Grandure.

Our 1st Duty.

2. Know them; that is, *mind them, and conſider them*; as in that paſſionate Lamentation of our Redeemer over *Jeruſalem*, Luke 19. 42. *Oh that thou hadſt known in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace.* That is, Oh that thou hadſt minded them, and hadſt conſidered them: So *Paul knowing*

that

that one part of the Counſel were Phariſees, and the other Sadducees; that is, conſidering it. Acts 23. 6. Γνὺς.

3. Knowing imports *caring, and providing for them: Lord, what is Man that thou takeſt knowledge of him?* Pſalm 144. 3. that thou doſt care for him, or provide for him. *The righteous man regardeth the life of his beaſt*, Prov. 12. 10. In the *Hebrew* it is, *he knows it*; and much more ſhould you *regard the Life of your Elders.* יודע

4. Knowing imports *loving*; *the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous*, Pſalm 1. 6. *Depart from me, I know you not*, Matth. 7. 23. *If any man love God, the ſame is known of God*, 1 Cor. 8. 3. *i. e.* If any Man love God, the ſame is beloved of God; *for we love him, becauſe he firſt loved us.* That is the firſt Duty; you muſt know them, you muſt acknowledge them, you muſt mind and conſider them, and what they ſay; you muſt care and provide for them, and love them.

II. But, *Secondly*, You muſt *eſteem them very highly*, ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ, *ſuperabundantly*; Oh be not afraid that you ſhould abound too much in your eſteeming them.

III. And, *Thirdly*, You muſt love them, eſteem them highly *in love*; hereunto is added the true Motive of your eſteeming them, and loving them; that is, *for their Works ſake.* That is the third part of the Text, the Duties that are required from the People to their Miniſters.

IV. He exhorts to another Duty; that is, that they ſhould *be at Peace one with another, and with their Elders:* It ſeems to have connexion with the former Duties, either *as an effect*, and then you muſt underſtand it thus; in your conſcientious knowing, eſteeming, and loving your Elders, your mutual Peace will be beſt maintained and preſerved: But if any do deſpiſe their Elders, Schiſm and Diviſion will preſently ariſe. Or elſe this, *Be at Peace among your ſelves*, may be joined to the former *as a means*, and then you may underſtand it thus, mutual Peace will help you to carry it to your Elders according to your Duty; but if you are divided one from another, you will fail in your Duty to your Elders, and quarrel with them alſo. From theſe Verſes I propoſe theſe Points of Doctrine to you.

I. *That ſuch as are ſet over a Church of Chriſt, muſt labour among them, and admoniſh them.*

II. *That it is the Duty of the whole Church, and of every particular Member of the Church, to know, eſteem, and love, moſt abundantly, them that are over them, in the Lord.*

III. *That the Elder's faithfully attending to his Work, and the Peoples conſcientious diſcharge of their Duty to their Elder, and mutual Peace, are ſtrictly joined together.*

I will make what haſte I can, a little to open, and apply theſe Doctrines to you.

Doct. I. *That ſuch as are ſet over a Church of Chriſt, muſt labour among them, and admoniſh them.*

Give me leave to open unto you their Dignity and their Duty, and ſo to apply it.

I. For their Dignity. Firſt, *They are ſet over a Church.* Secondly, *In the Lord.*

1. They are ſet over *a Church of Chriſt*; we are not ſet over many Churches, but each over that particular Church where Chriſt doth place us; it is an human Device to ſet one Man over many Churches; but Elders are over particular Churches: And in the right Execution of their Office, and the Duties of their Office, they are over *the whole Church, and every Member thereof*, tho' as to their Perſons they may be under them. As *Luther* ſaid, *In regard of my Perſon I will fall down before any Man; but in regard of the Truth of Chriſt, which I adminiſter, I look upon even the Kings of the Earth to be but as Duſt.* Whatever weakneſs, or darkneſs may be in an Elder, yet in his Holy Adminiſtrations *he is over* even *all the People.* As the Maſter of a Ship, whilſt he guides the Ship aright, in the work of guiding the Ship, is over all that are in the Ship; tho' a King were in it, yet it belongs to the Maſter to order and guide the Ship. It is true indeed, that the Elders are the *Servants* of the Church *for Jeſus ſake*, 2 *Cor.* 4. 5. But you are not from thence to argue, that they are properly your Servants to be commanded by you; but they are Servants; that is, they are *to lay out themſelves wholly in ſeeking the profit, and edification of the Church, according to the Duty of their Office.* And they are alſo the Servants of Chriſt, to do his Work to the Church: Thus in *Col.* 4. 12. *Epaphras, who is one of you, a ſervant of Chriſt, ſaluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayer*, &c. So the Apoſtle ſaith, *The ſervant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient;*

Mr. *Shepherd's* Caveat.

As Acts 13. 36.

in

in meekneſs inſtructing them that oppoſe themſelves. 2 Tim. 2. 24. And, being the Servants of Chriſt, they muſt not perſuade any to believe Men, or pleaſe Men: *Do I now perſuade men or God? or, do I ſeek to pleaſe men? for if I yet pleaſed men, I ſhould not be the ſervant of Chriſt*, Gal. 1. 10.

In the ſame Sence they are called *Men of God*, 1 Tim. 6. 11. *dedicated to his ſervice*, in an eſpecial manner; they are inſtituted by Chriſt, they receive their Authority from Chriſt by the Church, they depend on Chriſt for the faithful diſcharge of their Work; and their Authority is not to be taken from them, unleſs they forfeit their Calling by ſuch Errors and ſcandalous Enormities as deſerve Excommunication; till then they are *over you*, and are *your Rulers*.

2. They are over the Church, *in the Lord*; it is not an earthly Dignity, no Magiſterial Dictatorſhip, no rigid Authority, no Secular Grandure belongs to them. So our Lord told his Apoſtles in *Luke* 22. 26. *ye ſhall not be ſo*; *i. e.* ye ſhall not exerciſe Lordſhip and Authority in a rigid way; *but he that is greateſt among you, let him be as the younger*; *and he that is chief*, (it is the ſame word that is rendred Governor, *Matth.* 2. 6.) *as he that doth ſerve.* We are not to *lord it over Gods heritage*, 1 Pet. 5. 3. Ὁ ἡγούμενος.

The means of the Elders executing their Office are not carnal means, but Spiritual; not carnal Force, nor carnal Policy, but the Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God*, 2 Cor. 10. 4, 5. Elders muſt not make their own Will, but the Will of Chriſt, the Rule of all their Actings in the Church of Chirſt: It is in the Lord.

I deſign briefly to open unto you how they are over the Church in the Lord. *Firſt*, In General. And, *Secondly*, In Particular.

I. In General I ſhall ſhew you, That all the Names and Titles that are given to the Miniſters of Churches in the Scripture, do both ſpeak Authority; entruſted to them by Chriſt, and to be exerciſed by them in the Name of Chriſt, and for his Glory; and do alſo import a tender Care, Kindneſs, Compaſſion, and Watchfulneſs, that they ought to have of the Flock. 1 *Tim.* 3. 5. How ſhall he care for the Houſe of God? They do alſo import their faithfulneſs, and ſubjection to their Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

1. They are called the *Meſſengers of the Lord of Hoſts*, Mal. 2. 7. They are called the *Angels of the Churches*; *Angels ſent by Jeſus Chriſt unto the Churches*, Rev. 1. 20. They are called *Ambaſſadors* to treat with Sinners in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, 2 *Cor.* 5. 20. And they muſt not ſpeak their own Words, but their Lords Words; they muſt not ſeek their own Will; or their own Glory, but his that ſent them; and they are compaſſionately to intreat poor Rebels to ſeek Peace with Chriſt; and they are carefully to watch to preſerve Peace between Chriſt and poor Souls.

The word here uſed, מַלְאָךְ is often rendred *Angel*, As 2 *Sam.* 14, 17, 20.

2. They are called the *Fathers* of the People: So *Elijah* was called, *My Father, my Father*, 2 Kings 2. 12. Even Idolaters did own this Title. *Micha* in Mount *Ephraim*, Judges 17. 10. deſired the *Levite* to be *a Father to him*; the Men of *Dan* told the *Levite*, *That it was better for him to be a Father to a whole Tribe, than to a private Houſe.* *Joram* called *Eliſha, my Father*, 2 Kings 6. 21. So alſo did *Joaſh*, 2 Kings 13. 14. And eſpecially ſuch Miniſters, as Chriſt makes uſe of to be Inſtruments of the converſion of Sinners, are their Fathers: Therefore they, being Fathers, *muſt travail in birth*, that Chriſt may be formed in the Hearts of thoſe to whom they miniſter; as the Apoſtle tells the *Galatians*, Gal. 4. 19. he did on their behalf; and they muſt alſo be *tenderly affectionate*, and ſolicitous for the good of their People: *As ye know*, ſaith the Apoſtle to the *Theſſalonians*, *how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, (as a Father doth his Children,)* 1 *Theſſ.* 2. 11. They are Fathers that muſt comfort, and exhort, and charge the People. But withal, they muſt not pretend to ſuch an abſolute Paternal Power, as to require any to believe what they ſay, or to do what they command, without ſhewing from the Word of God, that thus God reveals his Mind, and that thus God commands us to do: For any *ſuch* Paternal Power is forbidden by Chriſt, *call no Man Father on Earth; for one is your Father which is in Heaven*, Matth. 23. 9.

Judges 18. 12.

1 Cor. 4. 12.

3. They are called *Guides, or Rulers, or Leaders*, Heb. 13. 7, 17, 24. The word ἡγούμενοι ſignifies Guides or Leaders, and ſo you may find it in the Margin of your Bibles, and it doth import *guiding with ſome kind of Authority*, in the *Name of Jeſus Chriſt*: It is the ſame word that is attributed to Chriſt, *Matth.* 2. 6. when it's ſaid, that out of *Bethlehem* ſhould come *a Governor, that ſhall rule my People Iſrael.* Chriſt is a Governour

nour and a Guide, *Iſaiah* 55. 4. And being to guide, *they are to go in and out before their People:* It is true of the chief Shepherd, and proportionably of under Shepherds, each of them, that their Sheep muſt hear his Voice, *and he leadeth them out,* and when he puts forth his own Sheep, *he goes before them, and the Sheep follow him, for they know his voice,* John 10 3, 4. But being Guides, they muſt not be *blind Guides,* wo be to them if they be ſuch. They muſt direct the Church, eſpecially in all weighty Affairs that concern the common Good of the Church; but they are to guide with *Counſel,* with *good Reaſon,* and with *Scripture,* not with Self-will, and with Rigour.

4. They are *Stewards,* 1 Titus 7. *A Biſhop muſt be blameleſs, as the Steward of God.* 1 Cor. 4. 1. *Let a Man ſo account of us, as of the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God;* therefore they muſt *be faithful:* So it follows in the ſecond Verſe. *It is required of Stewards, that a Man be found faithful;* and they muſt *be diligent and careful,* to give every one their portion of Meat in due ſeaſon, *Luke* 12. 42, 43. *Who then is that faithful and wiſe Steward, whom his Lord ſhall make Ruler over his Houſhold, to give them their portion of Meat in due ſeaſon? Bleſſed is that Servant, whom his Lord when he cometh, ſhall find ſo doing.* And they muſt remember, that they *muſt give an account* to their Lord when he cometh; and if they ſhall not be able to give an account with Joy, Oh how great will be the Terror of that Day!

5. They are *Watchmen,* Ezek. 3. 17. *Son of Man, I have made thee a watchman unto the houſe of Iſrael, therefore hear the words of my mouth, and give them warning from me.* Faithful Watchmen muſt receive the word from God, and muſt give warning from God; and let not any think that we are ſevere in our Warning, for it is from God that we give Warning. *My Lord, I ſtand continually upon the Watch-tower in the day time, and I am ſet in my Ward whole nights;* ſo the Duty of a Watchman is deſcribed, *Iſa.* 21. 8. Let none ſay in mockery, *Watchman, what of the Night? Watchman, what of the Night?* We tell you in the Name of the Lord, (*Ver.* 11, 12.) *the Morning cometh,* a bright Morning of National Peace; but if you repent not, *the Night alſo comes* of ſome diſmal trouble, or thicker darkneſs than what ever yet you have felt; *if you will enquire,* then *enquire* ſeriouſly; *and if you will return, return with* unfeigned Repentance, and *come* to Chriſt by a lively Faith; if you do

not,

not, it will be an uncomfortable reflection, that Conſcience will make in a day of Evil: This Evil comes upon us becauſe we did *not hearken unto the Voice of our Watchmen* warning us, *we obeyed not the Voice of our Teachers*, and deſpiſed Inſtruction.

Ἐπισκόπους. 6. They are called *Overſeers* or *Biſhops*. *Feed the Church of God, whereof the Holy Ghoſt hath made you Overſeers*, Acts 20.28. *If a Man deſireth the Office of a Biſhop, he deſireth a good work*, 1 Tim. 2. 1. But hereby is not to be underſtood, as ſome do groundleſly ſuppoſe, any *ſuperior Order, or Degree* of Preheminency that ſome Men have in the Miniſtry over others: No, it imports no more than the common Work of all Elders, *to overſee* the Flock that is committed to them, and to take heed to them; which requireth great Care and Diligence. *Titus* 1. 5. The Apoſtle tells him, *he left him to ordain Elders*; and at the ſixth *Verſe* he gives the Character of an Elder; *If any be blameleſs*, &c. and he proves it in the ſeventh *Verſe*; *for a Biſhop muſt be blameleſs*. They are to overſee the Flock with great *Care*, and with great *Diligence*; therefore they muſt *take the overſight of them, not by conſtraint, but willingly*; *not for filthy lucres ſake, but of a ready mind*, 1 Pet. 5. 2.

7. They be Ποιμένες, *Shepherds* or *Paſtors*, and they muſt *feed the People with Knowledge and Underſtanding*, Jer. 3. 15. It is true of Chriſt the chief Shepherd, and proportionably of each under Shepherd, that the People muſt *hear his word, and follow him*; *a ſtranger will they not follow, but will flee from him*; *for they know not the Voice of ſtrangers*, John 10. 4, 5. They are to give them wholeſom Food, wholeſom Doctrine; and the People muſt diſtinguiſh between ſound Doctrine and the Voice of Strangers. But ſtill it muſt be remembred, that *Chriſt* is the *chief Shepherd of our Souls*, 1 Pet. 2. 25. & 5. 4. And all Men that he doth ſet over one or other of his Churches, they are but *under Shepherds*; all that they deliver truly and ſoundly, they have it from *Chriſt, that one Shepherd*, Eccleſ. 12. 11. And they muſt, being under Shepherds, imitate the Example of our Great Shepherd, of whom it is propheſied in *Iſa.* 40. 11. *He ſhall feed his Flock like a Shepherd, he ſhall gather the Lambs with his Arm, and carry them in his Boſom, and ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with yonng.* Thus muſt Shepherds in the Churches do, they muſt care for the tender Lambs, they muſt care for thoſe that are *oppreſs'd with Infirmities*, they muſt not *over-drive* the Flock, and they muſt *diligently know the ſtate of their Flock*, whe-

whether increaſing, or decaying in grace. They muſt be very careful to avoid that reproof that God gives by *Ezekiel* againſt the Shepherds in that day, *Ezek.* 34. 2, 3, 4. *Woe be to the Shepherds of Iſrael, that feed themſelves; ſhould not the Shepherds feed the flock? Ye eat the fat, and clothe you with the wooll, ye kill them that are fed; but ye feed not the flock. The diſeaſed have ye not ſtrengthned, nor healed that which was ſick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye ſought that which was loſt; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.* Oh this is a ſevere Reproof, a dreadful Charge to be given in againſt any that are called to be *Shepherds* or *Paſtors*; it behoves us all to keep our ſelves unſpotted, and to be faithful.

8. They are called Διδάσκαλοι, *Teachers*, or *Doctors*, Iſa. 20. *v.* 30. *Thine eyes ſhall ſee thy Teachers, they ſhall no more be removed into corners.* 1 Cor. 12, 28. *God hath ſet ſome in the Churches, firſt Apoſtles, ſecondarily Prophets, thirdly Teachers:* Therefore they muſt *be apt to teach.* Therefore that is inculcated as the qualification of a Biſhop, 1 *Tim.* 3. 2. *He muſt be apt to teach.* And they muſt *hold faſt the faithful Word, and be able by ſound Doctrine to exhort, and convince gain-ſayers*, Titus 1. 8. They muſt exhort, inſtruct, and comfort the Church, *with all Authority*; *theſe things command and teach*, 1 Tim. 4. 11. *Charge them that are rich in this World*, cap. 6. 17. They muſt *reprove publickly* ſuch as do ſin publickly; they muſt give an open reproof for open ſins. 1 *Tim.* 5. 20. *Them that ſin, rebuke before all, that others alſo may fear*; and they muſt *take heed to themſelves, and to their Doctrine*: There muſt be great care and great ſolicitouſneſs in us, that what we ſpeak in the Name of the Lord, be indeed the Mind of the Lord, and cordially believed and ſubmitted unto by our ſelves as ſuch. 1 *Tim.* 4. 16.

9. And laſtly, They are called Πρεσβύτεροι, *Elders*, or *Preſbyters. If any Man be ſick, let him ſend for the Elders of the Church*, James 5. 14. *The Elders that are among you, I exhort, who am alſo an Elder*, 1 Pet. 5. 1. But with Elders there muſt be *Wiſdom*, and *an Ability to give Counſel*, and *Gravity*; they muſt not be *Novices*, they muſt *Rule well*, and *be Examples* to the People.

Thus in general, from their Names and Titles, I have ſhewed you that they are *over you, in the Lord.*

II. I ſhall ſhew you a little in Particular what you are to underſtand by this *being over you, in the Lord.*

1. It is *a Power communicated by Chriſt's Word of Command,* or *Inſtitution*; the Conſtitutions of the Goſpel do preſcribe it, *Matth.* 28. 20. *teaching them to do whatſoever things I have commanded you:* And if any do aſſume more than Chriſt doth grant and command in his Word, ſuch are Uſurpers, Thieves, and Robbers, vainly pretending to what they do not receive and derive from Chriſt by his Word.

2. *The Rule that Chriſt hath entruſted and committed to them by his Word, is the guidance of the Church, in all things belonging to the Worſhip of God*; for the ordering and diſpoſing of all things in the Church, for Chriſt's Glory, and the Churches Edification; they are to care for all the Spiritual Concernments of the whole Society that is committed to them; *they are to care for the Houſe of God,* 1 Tim. 3. 5.

3. *They have their Power immediately by the Church, but not from the Church; Chriſt doth apply the Office, tho' the Church deſigns the Perſon:* The Church chuſeth them, and the Holy Ghoſt makes them Overſeers, *Acts* 20. 28. They are ſent by Chriſt, *John* 13. 20. *He that receiveth whomſoever I ſend, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that ſent me:* They are *Ambaſſadors for Chriſt*; they do act *in his ſtead,* and *by the Authority that he hath committed to them.* As a King in his abſence, may appoint Officers to wait upon his Queen, and to manage the Affairs of his Kingdom; and may alſo give Rules, that upon the death of any of them, ſhe ſhould chuſe new ones; yet ſtill their Authority is ſuch as the King hath vouchſafed in his Commiſſion to them, not what the Queen gives them by chuſing them.

Dr. *Goodwin's* Government of Churches.

4. *The Obligation of the Members of the Church, to a free, and voluntary, and uncompelled Obedience to them, doth ariſe from the Authority of Jeſus Chriſt, which the Elders exerciſe according to his Laws.* Your Obedience, I ſay, muſt be free and voluntary, yet you are obliged to obey them, becauſe they exerciſe the Authority of Chriſt, according to his Laws. They do not act by the Authority of the Church, when they declare the conſent and determination of the Church in the common Affairs of the Church. The Church doth in conſenting exerciſe their Liberty, and their Privilege, according to the order

of

of the Goſpel, (for the order of the Goſpel is ſuch, that no act can take place in the Church without their own conſent) but whilſt the Church doth thus exerciſe their Liberty, and the Elders do declare the conſent of the Church; yet ſtill they act by the Authority of Chriſt, and in his Name, *Matth.* 28. 3 laſt Verſes. *All Power is given to me in Heaven and in Earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt: Teaching them to obſerve all things that I have commanded you. Note here,* That *becauſe all Power is given unto me, therefore* I do authorize you to *diſciple and baptize all Nations, and* to *teach them to obſerve all the* Inſtitutions of Worſhip *that I have commanded you.* All Goſpel Miniſtrations are grounded upon the Power that is given to Chriſt; and that not only with reſpect to the Apoſtles themſelves, but alſo with reſpect to ordinary Elders, that are their Succeſſors; for ſo it follows, *Lo I am with you always, to the end of the World.* So in *Tit.* 2. 15. *Theſe things teach, and exhort, and rebuke with all all authority; let no Man deſpiſe thee.* They muſt not act Imperiouſly, nor Precariouſly, but they are to act in their Miniſtration *with all Authority*; and this Authority is not their own Authority, but Chriſt's; and the *Authority of Chriſt* muſt be *be freely owned; no Man muſt deſpiſe them.* Thus I have ſpoken to their Dignity, *they are over you, in the Lord.*

II. Conſider their Work; *they labour among you, and admoniſh you:* And here let me ſhew you Summarily, Firſt, *What their Work is.* And, Secondly, That it is *a labour.*

I. *As for their Work,* the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *Eph.* 4. 12. *For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Miniſtry, for the edifying the Body of Chriſt:* There ſeems to be a tranſpoſition of theſe words, *for the work of the Miniſtry,* which lieth in thoſe two things here named, *the jointing in of the Saints* into Chriſt, and into Church Fellowſhip, *and the edifying of the Body,* that ſuch as are not Saints, may become Saints by the Power of the Word, and be jointed into the Church; and after that they are jointed in, that the Body might be edified. Particularly. Πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν.

1. *They are to preach the Word of God, and they are to adminiſter all the Ordinances of God;* and they muſt do it *diligently*

gently and *faithfully*. This charge is given, 2 *Tim.* 4 12. *Preach the word, be inſtant, in ſeaſon, and out of ſeaſon; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-ſuffering, and doctrine.* They muſt *ſpeak like the Oracles of God*, 1 Pet. 4. 11. with clear Evidence of Scripture Light, *that God in all things may be glorified.* They muſt not *corrupt* and *mingle* the pure *Word of God*, with the ſophiſtical Notions and Errors of Men, 2 *Cor.* 2. 17. They muſt not *lay wood, and hay, and ſtubble upon the foundation*; if they do, *their Work* ſhall ſuffer loſs, and themſelves *be ſaved* with great difficulty; *ſo as by fire*, 1 Cor. 3. 12, 15.

2. *They muſt watch for your Souls*, Heb. 13. 17. *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and ſubmit your ſelves; for they watch for your Souls.* They muſt watch *with great care*, and great diligence; tho' thereby they be expoſed *to great trouble*, and great danger: They muſt warn the People of their Backſlidings, and of their Wanderings, and they muſt charge them, that they keep the way of the Lord; they muſt exhort them to their preſent Duty, and they muſt exhort them to lay hold on their future Reward. They muſt be very watchful, *leſt by ſome means the Tempter ſhould tempt any, and their labour ſhould be in vain*, 1 Theſſ. 3. 5. They muſt warn them when any danger approacheth; as God chargeth *Ezekiel* in *Chap.* 3. 18, 19, Verſes; *When I ſay unto the wicked, Thou ſhalt ſurely die; and thou giveſt him not warning, nor ſpeakeſt to warn the wicked from his wicked ways, to ſave his life; the ſame wicked Man ſhall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hands*, &c.

Bear with us, Beloved, if we ſeem unto you to be too earneſt, and too warm in our Admonitions and Reproofs; we ſpeak *for the life of your Souls*, and it is *for the life of our own Souls alſo*; we muſt ſhew you the good way of the Lord, convince you of the Equity of it, and labour to impreſs you with a ſence of your Duty, and excite you by the moſt powerful Motives we can uſe, to a cheerful, even, and conſtant walking in the ways of the Lord.

3. *The Elders are to exhort and comfort all* the Members of the Church, (yea, and all that deſire to receive Inſtruction from them) *as their Condition and Neceſſities do require*: They muſt do this with great *gentleneſs* and *compaſſion*, with ſimpathizing *Bowels*, and *condeſcending Love*; ſuch the Apoſtle tells the *Theſſalonians* was his Carriage towards them, 1 *Theſſ.* 2. 7, 8. *We*

were

were gentle among you, even as a Nurse cherisheth her Children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own Souls, because you were very dear unto us. So also he chargeth us, 1 *Thess.* 5. 14.

Brotherly Love doth oblige all to attend unto this Duty; but the Office committed to the Elder doth much more oblige him to it; he is to be *patient towards all,* (2 Tim. 2. 25.) and *in meekness to instruct them that do oppose themselves; if peradventure God may give them repentance, that they may escape out of the snare of the Devil.* They are to do this generally in their *publick preaching* of the Gospel, and also particularly *from House to House:* Thus the Apostle declared his diligence, *Acts* 20. 20. *I have kept back nothing that was profitable to you; but I have shewed you, and taught you publickly, and from House to House.*

4. *They are to defend, and maintain the Truth,* against all *Corruption* and *Error,* 2 Tim. 1. 13, 14. *Hold fast the form of sound words, in Faith and Love, which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing that is committed to thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.* And they are not only to keep it themselves, but they must by sound Doctrine, exhort, and convince Gainsayers; *the mouths of gain-sayers must be stopt, who subvert whole Houses, speaking things they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake,* 1 Tit. 1. 11. And in *Chap.* 2. *v.* 8. it is required of them that they have *sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of them.* It is that which requireth great Wisdom, that we do keep close to the Word, that we hold fast the Form of wholesom Words, according to the Scripture, and that all that we speak in the Name of the Lord, be sound Speech, that cannot be condemned; *we must contend earnestly for the Faith which was once delivered to the Saints,* Jude 3. *v.* We must watch against *grievous Wolves entering in amongst us:* This is the Charge given to the Elders in *Acts* 20. 28, 29. The *Churches,* and especially the *Angels* of the Churches, *Rev.* 2. 2. must *try them that say they are Apostles, and are not; and find them to be lyars.*

5. They that are *over* the Church *must be exemplary in yielding Obedience to all the Commandments of Christ. Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these Commandments, and shall*

teach Men ſo, ſhall be called the leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven; Matth. 5. 19. If you *teach* it not in your *Preaching*, and *teach* it in your *Example*, that any of the Commands of Chriſt are too little to be regarded; you incurr the Threatning of being *excluded* from the *Kingdom of Heaven:* Oh what cauſe of trembling have we! So the Apoſtle chargeth *Timothy*, 1 Tim 4, *v.* 12. *Be thou an example of the Believers, in word, in converſation, in charity, in ſpirit, in faith, in purity.* And in 2 *Tim.* 2. 22. *Flee alſo youthful luſts; but follow righteouſneſs, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.* Elders are ſet up in a *golden Candleſtick* to be *Lights*, and they muſt be pure *Lights*, they muſt be *burning and ſhining Lights*; if there be any filthineſs in them, it will leſſen the Light, and make the Light offenſive, which they hold forth to the People: They are *ſet upon a Hill*, the Eyes of all Men are upon them; and their not walking in exemplary Holineſs, brings a great reproach upon the Goſpel and Truths of Chriſt which they preach. But it is honourable, if they can ſay, as *Philip.* 3. 17. That is the firſt thing they muſt *labour*.

II. *This is labour*; to do this is *labour* (Beloved) *even unto wearineſs:* As Κοπῶντας, the *Greek* word, ſignifieth: The ſame word is tranſlated, being *weary*, John 4. 16. *Thus ſate Jeſus weary on the Well. We have toiled all night, and caught nothing,* Luke 5. 5. The work of the Miniſtry, my Beloved, *is a good work*, and it is a work that may be *deſired*, 1 Tim. 3. 1. But it may not be deſired for Honours ſake, nor for Maintenance ſake, but for Works ſake: But, as it is a good and deſirable Work, ſo it is a painful and laborious Work; it is hard toilſom Labour, ſo that they need to *give themſelves wholly to it.*

Κεκοπιακῶς. Κοπιάσαντες.

1. *There is the labour of the Brain*; there is a giving attendance to Reading, Meditation, and Prayer, which is commanded them, that ſo they may faithfully diſcharge the Duty of their Office. 1 *Tim.* 4. 13. *Till I come give attendance to Reading, to Exhortation, to Doctrine:* And Verſe 15. *Meditate on theſe things, give thy ſelf wholly to them.* 2 Tim. 2. 15. *Study to ſhew thy ſelf approved unto God; a workman that needeth not to be aſhamed; rightly dividing the word of Truth:* There needs continual Study, Reading, and Meditation; which is hard

Labour,

Labour, and doth greatly exhauſt the ſtrength of their natural Spirits: *The Preacher ſought to find out acceptable words; and that which was written was upright, even the words of truth*, Eccleſ. 12. 15.

2. *Their Work is Heart labour*; in their Work they muſt *labour* hard *with their own Hearts*, and with *the Hearts of thoſe that God hath ſet them over.* They *labour* with *their own Hearts*, for in their Hearts are like Paſſions as other Men have; they have many times unbelief vexing them, deſpondency caſting them down; *without are fightings, and within are fears*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, 2 *Cor.* 7. 4. They are to *ſerve God with their ſpirits in the Goſpel of Chriſt*; ſincerely and heartily, *Rom.* 1. 9. But their Spirits are ſometimes diſcompoſed, and diſquieted, and caſt down; and at other times *their Spirit is willing, and their Fleſh is weak.* They labour with their own Hearts, for they muſt be careful of their own Souls, 1 *Cor.* 9. 27. If they be *keepers of others Vineyard*, and do not *keep their own Vineyard*, if they do not *take heed to themſelves, that they may ſave themſelves*, as well as others, they ſhall be found Fools in the Iſſue of their *Labours.* And as they have hard labour with their own Hearts, ſo they have alſo hard *labour* with the *Hearts of thoſe whom they teach*; and if God doth not help them, to work on the Hearts of them whom they teach, they can do nothing. Thus the Apoſtle expreſſeth his Labour, *Coloſſ.* 1. 28, 29. *Whom we preach, warning every Man, and teaching every Man in all Wiſdom, that we may preſent every Man perfect in Chriſt Jeſus; whereunto I alſo labour, ſtriving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily*: If that the Spirit work with us mightily, then our *Labour is pleaſant*, tho' 'tis *hard*: But if we be put to lament, *who hath believ'd our report, and to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed?* It even breaks our hearts with grief.

3. *It is Labour for which they many times have little thanks given them.* Thus the Apoſtle tells the *Corinthians*, 2 Cor. 12. 15. *I will very gladly ſpend, and be ſpent for you, tho' the more abundantly I love you, the leſs I be loved.* So great an *Apoſtle*, met with ſo mean *a requital*, from thoſe whom he had by his preaching *Converted*; and other Elders do many times meet with a diſcouraging requital, the more abundantly they love them, the leſs they are beloved by them: they are many times *counted enemies, becauſe they tell the people the truth*, as the-

the *Galatians* did account *Paul*; whereof he complains, *Gal.* 4. 16.

4. *It's hard Labour, wherein many times they have little ſucceſs.* They are *made Fiſhers of Men*, Mat. 4. 19. and they are put many times to complain unto the Lord, as *Luke* 5. 5. *Maſter we have toiled all Night, and have caught nothing.* Many times they ſee no fruit of their labours, before they are called home; and they that come after them, reap the harveſt of the ſeed which they did ſow. So our Lord told his Diſciples, *Jo.* 4. *v.* 38. *Other Men laboured, and ye are entred into their labours.*

5. *It is a toilſome Work, which is uſually attended with great Sufferings*, whilſt they do faithfully diſcharge their Miniſtry. Wicked Men hate them, becauſe they cannot ſpeak good to them in a way of ſin; and the frowardneſs of their Brethren doth many times occaſion great trouble to them. The Apoſtle frequently makes mention of his Sufferings, 2 *Tim.* 1. 12. *For the which cauſe I alſo ſuffer theſe things, nevertheleſs I am not aſhamed, for I know in whom I have believed.* So alſo, 2 *Tim.* 2. *v.* 9, 10. and 2 Cor. 11. 23.—27 *v.* They that are called to this Work, muſt *endure hardneſs as good Soldiers of Jeſus Chriſt.* So we are commanded; 2 *Tim.* 2. 3. And we muſt not be moved by any ſufferings and troubles whatſoever, ſo as to leave our Miniſtry becauſe of Sufferings, *Acts* 20. 24. *None of theſe things move me, neither count I my life dear to me, ſo I may finiſh my courſe with joy, and fulfil my Miniſtry which I have received of the Lord Jeſus.* It is then, you ſee, hard Labour; *labour of the Brains, labour with the Heart, labour that they have little thanks for, labour that they have often little ſucceſs in, labour in which they many times ſuffer great and hard things.* Yet thus we muſt *Work*, and thus we muſt *Labour*; *a neceſſity is laid upon us*, (1 Cor. 4 9.) *and woe to us if we preach not the Goſpel.* 1 Tim. 4. 16. Thus muſt we *take heed to ſave our own Souls, and thoſe that hear us*; and we muſt take heed that we be faithful, that the blood of none be required at our hands. *I call you*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *to witneſs that I am free from the blood of all Men*, Acts 20. 26. If the blood of any, to whom we preach, ſhould be required at our Hands, how ſhall we anſwer it to our Lord?

By

By way of Application.

1. *The good Lord pardon all the Failings and Miſcarriages of us, who miniſter the Word, and Doctrine*; all our coming ſhort in ſo great a Work: It was a great thing the Apoſtle ſaid, *I know nothing by myſelf*, I know nothing wherein I have failed in the work of my Miniſtry to you, *yet am I not hereby juſtified*; for Chriſt knoweth my Work more perfectly than Man doth, 1 *Cor.* 4. 4. But as for us poor ſinners, we dare not ſay, that we know no thing by our ſelves; we have *many Miſcarriages* that we are guilty of; but we hope and believe, *that we ſhall be ſaved by the Blood of Chriſt, even as ye.*

2. *Who is ſufficient for theſe things?* The Apoſtle puts the Queſtion, 2 *Cor.* 2. 16. No Man, no Angel, is ſufficient for this great Work; except we have a freſh anointing of the Holy Spirit, except we have full communications of Life, and Love, and Holineſs from the Holy Spirit. *We are not ſufficient of our ſelves, to think any thing as of our ſelves, our ſufficiency is of God*, 2 Cor. 3. 5. Elders muſt *walk humbly with their God*, on whom they depend for all their Supplies; their *Office*, and all their *Abilities* for their Office, are *freely given* them from the *Grace of Chriſt*: And they muſt alſo *walk humbly with them, that they are ſet over*; remembring that themſelves were by Nature alſo Rebels againſt the Majeſty of Heaven; and they muſt walk humbly, conſidering their many Defects and Weakneſſes that they are conſcious of to themſelves: Even the Apoſtle *Paul* ſaith, 2 *Cor.* 10. 1. *Now I Paul my ſelf beſeech you, by the meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt*: And if *Paul* himſelf did, how much more muſt we, beſeech you by the meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt? Elders muſt not lift up themſelves above their Brethren; they muſt fear, *leſt being lifted up with pride, they ſhould fall into the condemnation of the Devil*, 1 Tim. 3. 6.

3. *Let us who are called to this Work and Labour, give thanks unto Jeſus Chriſt, who calleth and helpeth us*; and let us *give all the glory unto him. I thank God*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *who enabled me, and counted me faithful, putting me into the miniſtry*, 1 Tim. 1. 12.

1. 12. It is matter of Thankſgiving from us, that God ſhould *count us faithful*, and *make us faithful*; and that God ſhould *enable us to labour*, and make *us able Miniſters of the New Teſtament; not of the Letter, but of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. 3. 6. We receive all from him, that we may give all the glory unto him; *To me, who am leſs than the leaſt of all Saints, is this grace given; that I ſhould preach among the Gentiles the unſearchable riches of Chriſt*, Eph. 3. 8. So we may alſo ſay,

4. *Let us* who are called to this Work and Labour, *ſtir up our ſelves to Labour*: As the Apoſtle exhorts *Timothy*, 2 *Tim.* 4. 5. *Watch thou in all things, endure affliction, do the work of the Evangeliſt, and make full proof of thy Miniſtry*: So let us watch in all things, endure Affliction, *do the work of Elders*, and *make full proof of our Miniſtry*; let us make full proof to others of our Miniſtry, and of our Faithfulneſs in this great Work, whereunto we are called: We have a great Example given us by the Apoſtle *Paul*, 2 *Cor.* 6. 3, 4, 5, 6. *Giving no offence in any thing, that the Miniſtry be not blamed; but in all things approving our ſelves as the Miniſters of God.* This was the Apoſtles Care, this is to be our Care; in all things to approve our ſelves as the Miniſters of God, *in much Patience, in Afflictions, in Neceſſities, in Diſtreſſes, in Labours, in Watchings in Faſtings, by Pureneſs, by Knowledge, by Long-ſuffering, by Kindneſs, by the Holy Ghoſt, by Love unfeigned.* This ought to be the care and reſolute endeavours of our Souls; and that we may be enabled ſo to do, we muſt ſeek to abound more in *love* to the *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, John 21 15. and in *love* to the *Souls of the People*, 1 Theſſ. 2. 8.

Laſtly, *You who have called Elders to watch over you*, (for there are not only of this Church, but other Churches preſent,) do you, I ſay, *ſtrengthen their Hands, and encourage them in their Work, as much as poſſibly you can*; do you countenance and comfort them; and, as the Apoſtle giveth charge concerning *Timothy, ſee that he may be with you without fear; for he worketh the work of the Lord*, 1 Cor 16. 10. So let your Elders be with you without fear, for they work the Work of the Lord; do what you can to ſtrengthen their Hands in ſuch hard and laborious Work: And that leads me to the

II. Doct. *That it is the Duty of the whole Church, and of every Member thereof, to know, eſteem, and love, moſt abundantly, thoſe that are over them in the Lord, and that for their Works ſake.*

I

I ſhall ſpeak a little in the firſt place to *the Duty*, and in the ſecond place, to *the Motive*, for *their Works ſake.*

I. As to the Duty that you owe to your Elders; in ſhort, it is *Love*; as *Love is the fulfilling of the Law; and all the other Commandments are briefly comprehended in this Saying, Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf:* So give me leave to ſay, That *Love is the fulfilling* of all the *Duties that you owe to your Elders*; and all *other Duties that you owe* to them, *are briefly comprehended in this Saying, Love your Elders unfeignedly*; love them that are over you in the Lord without diſſimulation; *Love* will make you doubly diligent in performing every good Office to to them: Whatever you do to, or for them, if *Love* be wanting, it is not valuable; if you do it for fear of Men, or from any mean or ſordid Principle, it is not acceptable. But, Particularly,

1. *You muſt honour and reverence them*; you muſt *highly eſteem them*, for they are *worthy of double Honour.* The Apoſtle tells the *Galatians*, that they had once ſuch an eſteem of him, *Gal.* 4. 14. *My temptation that was in my Fleſh ye deſpiſed not, nor rejected; but received me as an Angel of God, even as Chriſt Jeſus:* Tho' his bodily Preſence was mean, tho' he was expoſed to many Sufferings, and many Infirmities, yet they did highly eſteem his Doctrine, as if an *Angel* from Heaven, or *Jeſus Chriſt* had preached it; and they did in like manner eſteem him for his Doctrines ſake; they did greatly eſteem him. Thus we read, *Rom.* 10. 15. *How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings?* The Feet are the meaneſt Members, and liable to ſoil; but yet becauſe they bring the glad Tidings of the Goſpel, you ſhould eſteem that in them, which is meaneſt, to be beautiful; you ſhould eſteem them to be worthy of Honour and Reverence. The Apoſtle tells us, that ſo the *Corinthians* carried it to *Titus*, 2 *Cor.* 7. 15. *His inward affection is more abundant towards you, whilſt he remembreth the obedience of you all; how with fear and trembling you received him:* Ye were afraid, leſt any thing in your carriage might grieve him, or offend him. And let not any that have more years than their *Elders* that are ſet *over them* think, that therefore they are not obliged to *honour and reverence* them, *being younger*; the Scripture charge is, *Let no Man deſpiſe thy youth*, 1 Tim. 4. 12.

2. *You must obey them, and submit to them, in all things, that they speak to you in the Name of Christ, and from the Word of the Lord:* So in that before-named place, whilst he *remembreth the obedience of you all.* So, 1 *Cor.* 16. 16. *That you submit your selves to such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.* Heb. 13. 17. *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves: Obey* their Teachings, and *submit* to their Admonitions, Reproofs, and Government; do not you do as the ſtubborn *Iſraelite* did, when *Moſes* came to part two that were quarrelling, the faulty Perſon thruſt him away, and ſaid, *Who made thee a Ruler, and Judge over us?* Acts 7. 27. When your Elders would perſuade you to Peace, or Holineſs, don't fly in their Faces, and ſay, *Who made you Rulers over us?* But yield gently to their guidance, ſo far as they follow Chriſt, 1 *Cor.* 11. 1. *Be ye followers of us, as we alſo are of Chriſt Jeſus.* It is ſad to conſider, how fooliſhly we are apt to run into *Extreams*; ſome Elders are for taking *all to themſelves*, and they will be Abſolute, and Arbitrary, and will allow the Church no Power, Liberty, nor Privilege; and on the other ſide, ſome People are for taking *all to themſelves*, and will have their Elders to be no more than *Cyphers*, or *Tools* among them; they will not underſtand how their *Liberty* can conſiſt *with obeying*, and *ſubmitting* to them that are *over them, in the Lord.* There are ſome that are apt to have a great opinion of their own Sufficiency, Wiſdom, and Authority, and that they have little need of their Elders: But Chriſt will not bear it, that his Meſſengers ſhould be ſo ſlighted; and they that are humble, and wiſe, and ſincerely deſire the publick good of the Church; will *ſubmit* themſelves to them that are *over* them in the *Lord*, and they will be afraid of following their own Will, leſt in ſo doing they ſhould *miſlead* others; they will ſeek *the Law of Chriſt from the Mouth of their Elders*, that all things may be done *orderly*, according to the Word of God; and that their Elders may be with them, *without fear and trouble of Spirit.*

3. *You muſt believe and practiſe the ſincere Word of God, being preached unto you, by them that are over you in the Lord:* The Apoſtle doth greatly commend the *Theſſalonians* for this, 1 *Theſſ.* 1. 6. *Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word with much affliction, and with joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* And cap. 2. 13. *When ye received the Word of God, which*

which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the Word of Man, but as it is in truth the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. If that you do not believe; and obey the Word that is preached to you, as the Word of God; if you accept Mens persons, if you judge according to the Flesh, as your Ear, and as your fancy is pleased, and your humour is gratified; you do not shew that love to your Elder that God requireth of you. *Desire earnestly the sincere Milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby*; let the *Word of the Lord be precious unto you*, not only (as the manner of some is) when there is no open Vision, but also when it is plentifully dispenced. Let your growth be answerable to your feeding, let not fatness breed loathing, and nauseousness in you, being glutted by the Word. Do not despise the Stewards of Christ that minister it unto you; do not grow weary of the Ordinances of Christ, because you enjoy them peaceably; come not under that reproof, *Mal.* 1. 13. *Ye have said also, behold what a weariness is it? and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Oh be not you so guilty; lest God should judge you, and send *leanness into your Souls*, and make you to *wander from one Sea unto another, seeking the Word of the Lord, and ye shall not find it*, as he speaks, *Amos* 8. 12. Be not *all Ear*, do not content your selves with hearing many Sermons, and talking of them, that it is a good and a seasonable Word; do not content your selves without practising them: *If you know these things, happy are you if you do them: Be ye the Epistle of Christ, ministred by us, written not on Stone, or with Ink, but in the fleshly Tables of your Hearts by the spirit of God*, 2 Cor. 3. 3.

Surely, Beloved, if you profess never so much Honour, and Reverence, and Obedience, to us, in your outward Words and Actions, yet if the *Word of Christ*, which we preach, doth not *dwell richly in you*, if it be not by you highly valued, and rightly improved, and you do not bring forth the fruits of it, in your conversation, you do not what pleaseth Christ, nor what satisfieth us; it is not that love which we desire from you, but you send us mourning to our God. As the Lord tells *Ezekiel*, cap. 33. 32. *Loe thou art unto them, as a very lovely Song, of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an Instrument, for they hear thy words, and will not do them.* So we too often find it; and you make us weep bitterly, and cry out, because our Labours are successless. Oh take heed

that you do not turn your backs on the *Rod of Christ's Power*, the Word of his Grace, and take heed alſo that you do not hear, with an unbroken, and unaffected, and unbelieving heart; for if you do either of theſe, you are guilty of caſting off Chriſt.

4. *You muſt pray earneſtly for your Elders*, Heb. 13. 18. *Pray for us, for we truſt we have a good Conſcience, in all things willing to live honeſtly.* Pray that their ſtores, of the gifts and graces of the Spirit, may be encreaſed; pray that they may be helped by the Holy Spirit in their great work; as the Apoſtle calls upon the *Epheſians, cap. 6. 19. Pray for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the Myſtery of the Goſpel*; do not you ſtop your Miniſters mouth; do not you ſay that he grows dull, whilſt you neglect praying for him that God would open his mouth. So to the *Coloſſians* the Apoſtle ſaith, *cap. 4. 3. Withal, praying for us, that God would open a door of utterance, to ſpeak the Myſtery of Chriſt*; and to the *Theſſalonians*, 1 Theſ. 3. 1. *Finally Brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may run, and be glorified, even as it is with you.* Pray for us that we may have ſucceſs in our work, and pray that *we may be delivered from wicked and unreaſonable Men; for all Men have not Faith*; as it follows in the next verſe. And in *Rom.* 15. 30. *Now I beſeech you, Brethren, for the Lord Jeſus Chriſt's ſake, and the Love of the Spirit, that ye ſtrive together with me, in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that believe not in Judea, and that my Service that I have for Jeruſalem, may be accepted of the Saints*: Oh pray that their Labours may be acceptable; for tho' their Work *ought* to be acceptable, yet many times *it is not.* Pray for them that all their afflictions, dangers, and troubles, may be ſanctified to them, for the working out of their own Salvation: *This ſhall turn, to my Salvation, thro' your prayers, and the ſupplies of the Spirit of Chriſt*, Phil. 1. 19. *Pray* alſo *that God would ſend forth more Labourers into his Harveſt*, Luke 10. 2.

5. *You muſt communicate to them in all good things*, that ſo (if poſſible) they may live free from care, and from the cumber of the World, that they muſt not have their minds perplexed, or diverted, from their Studies, by outward ſtraits, or worldly entanglements: Yea, you may ſupply them ſo, that they may be able to ſhew *Hoſpitality*, and *Charity*. The Scripture is very expreſs for this, 1 Cor. 9. 7. *Who goeth a Warfare any time at his*

his own charge? who planteth a Vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a Flock, and eateth not of the Milk of the Flock? verſ. 14. *Even ſo hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the Goſpel, ſhould live of the Goſpel.* So *Gal. 6. 6. Let him that is taught in the Word, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things,* Matth. 10. 10. *The Labourer is worthy of his Hire.* It was *Jeroboam's* policy to make Prieſts of the loweſt of the people, and many do account it policy to keep their Miniſters bare, that ſo they may ſtill be the loweſt of the people; but herein they do not *take counſel of God.* And as *Elders* muſt not *be Hirelings* (they muſt not be ſuch as take care only for the profit, and are not willing to expoſe themſelves to hazard, and loſs, and danger; they muſt not *every one, look for his own gain from his quarter; a Biſhop muſt not be given to filthy lucre,* Iſa. 56. 11. *but muſt take the overſight of the Flock, not by conſtraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucres ſake, but of a ready mind;* as I ſay Miniſters muſt not be Hirelings) ſo when you give them a little, you muſt not any of you think that you may *treat them as* if they were *Hirelings*; you muſt none of you expect to command them in their work, and if they will not truckle to all your humours, you muſt not ſay that you will give them nothing; it is a juſt Debt you owe them, and gratitude obligeth you, to ſupply your Elders, according to your ability; ſo that they may have a comfortable ſubſiſtance among you, 1 *Cor. 9. 11. If we have ſown to you ſpiritual things, is it a great thing if we ſhall reap your carnal things?* The Apoſtle tells the *Romans* in *cap.* 15. 27. that the Churches of *Greece* were *Debtors* unto the Saints at *Jeruſalem, becauſe from them firſt came the Goſpel* Miniſtration and Ordinances, and much more are the people Debtors to their Miniſters, by whom the Word and Ordinances, are continually miniſtred unto them.

Titus 1. 7.
1 Pet. 5. 2.

6. *You muſt own your Elders in their Sufferings for the ſake of Chriſt, and of his Goſpel*; as in 2 *Tim.* 1. 16, 17, 18. The Apoſtle mentions *Oneſiphorus* with great praiſe, *for he often refreſhed me, and was not aſhamed of my Chains; and when I was at Rome ſought me out very diligently, and found me; and in many things he miniſtred unto him at Epheſus*; and he mentions it as a ſad charge againſt other Brethren, in *cap.* 4. 16. *At my firſt Anſwer no Man ſtood with me, but all Men forſook me; I pray God it be not laid to their charge:* Oh! do not you in a time of diſtreſs, when your Shepherd is aimed at, run away according to the Proverb, *I*

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will ſmite the Shepherd, and the Sheep ſhall be ſcattered: And do not think this is unſeaſonably moved, for you *know not what evil may be in the Earth*, therefore *hear for the time to come*. This then is the Duty that you owe to your Elders; you muſt honour and reverence them; you muſt obey them, and ſubmit to them; you muſt believe and practiſe the ſincere Word of God that they preach; you muſt pray earneſtly for them, and communicate to them in all good things; and you muſt own them in their Sufferings for Chriſt.

2. The ſecond thing is *the Motive*, why you muſt do this, and that is, *for their works ſake*: The work beloved is *toilſome* to them, and *profitable* for you, therefore you are to *love* them for their *work's ſake*. *See that he may be with you without fear, for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I alſo do*, 1 Cor. 16. 10. You muſt love Saints, as Saints; and you muſt love Miniſters, as Miniſters; *Matth.* 10. 41. You muſt ſhew kindneſs to *Prophets, in the name of a Prophet*, to *Elders, in the name of an Elder*. *Jehoram* honoured *Eliſha*, becauſe he helped him againſt his Enemies; he ſent him word of the Ambuſhes, laid by the *Syrian* King againſt him; and when he brought the Army of the *Syrians* into the midſt of *Samaria*, *Jehoram* cryed out, *My Father, my Father, ſhall I ſmite them?* 2 *Kings* 6. 21. but when *Eliſha* did not help *Jehoram* againſt the Famine, ſo ſoon as he expected, then he vowed he would *take off Eliſha's Head*, v. 31. ſo that the honour he gave him, was not for his *works ſake*, but becauſe he had ſome great benefit by him. The people followed *Chriſt*, but it was for the *ſake of the Loaves*, wherewith he fed them; *Joh* 6. 27. but when they did diſguſt his ſpiritual Doctrine, then they *forſook him*, v. 60, 66. and when they could not bear his cloſe reproofs (he told them, they did the *work of their Father the Devil*) then they took up *Stones to ſtone him*, *Joh.* 8. 39, 40, 59. Beloved, if you do limit your reſpect and kindneſs to your Elders, by ſuch *low Motives*, as their natural gifts, learning, fine pleaſing language, popularity, pliableneſs to your humours, and will, or any other carnal reſpect, you do not ſhew that true love to them, that you owe them: But you muſt perform faithfully, the Duties that you owe them, *for their works ſake*, that muſt be your *chief Motive*. It is a moſt excellent work; it is a work whereby your greateſt good and happineſs is promoted, your faith and joy is helped,

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and ſtrengthened; and your ſalvation furthered; you muſt love them for their work ſake, for their laborious diligence, and honeſt plainneſs, in exhorting, admoniſhing, reproving, and comforting you as the caſe doth require; this muſt be your Motive, and if you do not act from a *true Motive*, you do not act *acceptably*.

I ſhall add three Reaſons, why you muſt thus love them, and thus carry it, to them that are over you in the Lord.

For *Chriſt's* ſake, for your own ſake, and for your Elders ſake.

1. You muſt do thus *for Chriſt's ſake*, for they are ſent by *Chriſt*, and he hath a tender regard to them, and he gives charge concerning them, *do my Prophets no harm*: Whatever you do to them, he takes it as done to himſelf, *Matth.* 10. 40. *He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me; and he that deſpiſeth me, deſpiſeth him that ſent me.* So again *Luk.* 10. 16. *Chriſt* is concerned in all your carriages, in all your kindneſs, or unkindneſs, that you ſhew to his Meſſengers whom he ſends unto you. As *Moſes* anſwered in the behalf of *Aaron*, *Thou and all thy company are gathered together againſt the Lord, and what is Aaron, that ye murmur againſt him?* Numb. 16. 11. All your quarrels, all your contendings, all your murmurings, are againſt the Lord; and what are your poor Elders that ye murmure againſt them? if you caſt off your Elders, you caſt off *Chriſt*; if you diſcourage your Elders, you diſpleaſe *Chriſt*.

2. You muſt thus carry it to them *for your own ſake*; it's for your *good*; it is *profitable* for you, *to know them that are over you in the Lord*; but if you break *Chriſt's* Cords, and will not know them that are over you in the Lord, this is not liberty, but licentiouſneſs. It is for your Edification, for the Edification of the whole Church, that you ſhould love your Elders: The Church, *the body edifies it ſelf in love*, *Eph.* 4. 12, 16. It is *fooliſh* for any to think that *the Church* can be *encreaſed*, by *leſſening of the Elders*; your Elders are the Inſtruments, by which the Lord doth uſually diſpence ſpiritual bleſſings to you, things that accompany Salvation; if you deſpiſe and vex the Inſtruments, you may thereby obſtruct the communication of thoſe graces to your Souls; your Elders are perſons, on whoſe welfare, the common good of the Church depends, and therefore ought to be preferred in all kinds and degrees of love; they are given for this end, that *Chriſt* may *dwell among you*, by his Spirit and Faith,

Faith, *Psalm* 68. 18. *That he might fill all things*, Eph. 6. 10. That he might fill the Members with more Graces, and the Church with more Members. You may be tempted to think that you shall get by neglecting your Elders, but 'tis *unprofitable* for you, both here and hereafter: Your Elders may perhaps have the present Burthen, and trouble of your weakning their Hands in their Work, but the sad consequence will be to your selves; it will be to your own disadvantage, *Heb.* 13. 17. *They must give an account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you:* It is unprofitable for you, if you grieve their Spirits.

3. *For your Elders sake*; because it is for their good, that they may go on cheerfully in their laborious Work, and that they may be strengthned against those Temptation, wherewith their Work is attended. If you do not shew a Gospel Spirit in all your carriage to them, you sadden their Hearts, and make them to do their Work feebly. Consider, I beseech you, they are frail Men like your selves, and that the Wicked do daily *vex their righteous Souls*, that they have much difficulty in keeping their own Spirits, that they be not overcome by Temptation; and if you add further unto this, their Brethrens dealing roughly with them, Oh how will this pierce and grieve them? Consider, I beseech you, they are daily *giving an account* to the Lord Jesus of the Flock committed to them, if their Flock be a thriving Flock, a growing Flock, if they see the Graces of the Spirit abounding in them; then they with Joy praise Christ, for his Spirit and Grace bestowed on them: As the Apostle in the behalf of the *Philippians*, Chap. 2. 16, 17. & Chap. 1. 3, 4, 5. *That I may rejoyce in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain; yea, and if I be offered up, upon the sacrifice and service of your Faith, I joy and rejoyce with you all.* So likewise to the *Thessalonians*, 1 Thess. 3. 8, 9. *Therefore, Brethren, we are comforted over you all, in all our afflictions, and distresses, by your Faith; for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord; for what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy, wherewith we joy, before God for your sakes?* But if the Flock be diseased and weak, and unthriving; and if the *fat ones of the Flock do thrust with the Side, and push with the Horn*; then your poor Elders give their Account with sorrow, and mourn before the Lord, and make known their complaints to him, who will hear them. Was

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it not a ſad thing, that *Elijah* ſhould *make interceſſion to God againſt Iſrael?* Rom. 11. 2. And is it not a ſad thing that you ſhould ſtop the Mouths, and ſtraiten the Spirits of your Elders, when they pray for you? But the Apoſtle ſaith, *We were comforted in your comforts; and exceedingly the more we joyed for the joy of Titus, becauſe his ſpirit was refreſhed by you all,* 2 Cor. 7. 13. Let your Elders be comforted in your Comforts, let them be refreſhed by you all. That is the ſecond Doctrine. That it is the Duty of the Church, and every particular Member, highly to eſteem, and love, and honour them that are ſet over them, in the Lord.

By way of Application.

1. If any *faithful Elders* do meet with *a contrary carriage* from any that are in the Church, *let them not deſpond:* They have the Example of their Lord and Maſter, who ſuffered the like, *Iſaiah* 49. 4. *Then, ſaid I, I have laboured in vain, I have ſpent my ſtrength for nought, and in vain; yet ſurely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God.* God is Witneſs of your Faithfulneſs and Diligence, in your Work; and tho' you meet with nothing but contempt and hard uſage, God will give Judgment for you, God will reward you in due time. Let us conſider the Hand of *Satan* is in it, who is the great Enemy to the Goſpel, and to thoſe that are commiſſionated to diſpenſe it, and the Ordinances of it: Should we expect Peace *with Satan?* Can we expect any otherwiſe, but that ſo far as his Devices can prevail, he will do us all the miſchief, and cauſe us all the trouble he can? *I would have come unto you once and again,* ſaith *Paul,* 1 Theſſ. 2. 18. *but Satan hindred me;* he will hinder ſo far as God permits. Let us alſo conſider the *hand of God in it;* it is *to humble us, to ſtir us up to Prayer,* (they have rewarded me evil for good, but I give my ſelf to Prayer, *Pſalm* 109. 4.) and *to ſtir us up to greater diligence* in our Work; and conſider that he takes notice of all your Labour, and all thoſe Difficulties that you are under; *Thou haſt born, and haſt patience; and for my Name's ſake haſt laboured and haſt not fainted, Rev.* 2. 3. Remember the eye of God is upon you, obſerving how you

behave your ſelf, and that he takes gracious cognizance, of your going on couragiouſly under ſuch diſcouragements.

2. Let me apply this by way of Exhortation; *We beſeech you Brethren, to know them that are over you in the Lord, and that you eſteem them highly in love, for their Works ſake:* Let me beſeech you by the meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt to do ſo. Let not any ſay I, over-do in preſſing you, I have the great Apoſtle giving me an example in my Text, moſt ſeriouſly and moſt affectionately preſſing this Exhortation. We had rather be altogether ſilent in this matter, but there is danger leſt you ſhould be unmindful of your Duty: The Apoſtle ſaw it to be needful, and we find it to be needful, to exhort you, and ſtir up your minds, *by way of Remembrance*; and if we ſhould be totally negligent in this matter, it would be ſuch a piece of Modeſty and Self-denyal, as would turn to your loſs: Therefore I beſeech you, that you would thus love, and ſhew the Effects of your love to your Elders. And in order hereunto,

1. You muſt *underſtand aright*, and *be convinced of your Duty to your Elders*; be not willingly ignorant of your Duty; let not prejudice turn away your minds from the conſideration of your Duty; and let not your hearts be reſolved againſt it. Know and lay to heart, that the ſtation wherein Chriſt hath ſet your Elders, calls for thoſe Duties at your hands: let not evil Cuſtoms, deſire of Reputation, or of Domination, or deſire to obtain the Favour of any, leſſen your due reſpect to your Elders, but get a deep impreſſion on your Conſciences, that this is your Duty; ſtrive not againſt the conviction of it.

Conſider Chriſt commands you, and their work doth greatly oblige you, that you ſhould ſo carry it to them; put your Conſciences under the awe of *Chriſt's* Command, and love them for their work ſake; if this Motive affect you, you will do your Duty with more delight to your ſelves, and with greater acceptation to *Jeſus Chriſt*.

2. *Do not watch for the failings of your Elders*, that ſo you might have ſomewhat whereby to confirm your prejudices, and to juſtifie your murmurings againſt them; be not like Fleſh Flies, that love to dwell upon the ſore place; they are *Men* ſubject to like Paſſions with your ſelves; they are *Angels in Office*, but they are not yet *Angels in perfect Holineſs*; therefore do you cover their Infirmities with a Mantle of Love;

Love; never take pleasure in discovering *the nakedness* of your spiritual *Fathers.*

3. *Let your Love be constant*; do not you fall under that reproof, which the Apostle gives the *Galatians*, Gal. 4. 15, 16. *Where is then the blessedness ye speak of? for I bear you record, that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own Eyes, and have given them to me; am I therefore become your Enemy, because I tell you the truth?* Let that Love, that appeared warm in your first joyning in this Relation, be still encreasing; let it not presently decay: Be not like Children that are never pleased but with new things; be not of an unstable mind, always affecting changes. I am afraid that I have tyred you, in speaking to these two Doctrines, I will say therefore but little to the

3 Doctrine. *That the Elders faithful discharge of their Duty, and the Peoples conscientious discharge of their Duty, and mutual Peace, are strictly joyned together.*

Do not expect that you shall find the one without the other, and when you see these joyned together, then do you see *Zion* in her Beauty, then will you rejoyce in the Lord, and say, *Look upon* Zion, *the City of our Solemnities, thine eyes shall see* Jerusalem *a quiet Habitation, a Tabernacle that shall not be taken down,* &c. *Isa.* 33. 20.

Briefly let me mention every part of this Doctrine.

1. *The Elders discharge of their Duty, is a means to oblige the People, to a Conscientious discharge of theirs, and to promote mutual Peace.* Therefore, *Say to Archippus, take heed to the Ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfill it,* Col. 4. 17. You may not expect Love nor Reverence, if you do not faithfully fulfil the Ministry, that you have received in the Lord. If Elders be proud, and haughty, and self-will'd, they loose their hold of the Peoples Love. 2 *Cor.* 1. 24. *We have not dominion over your Faith, but are helpers of your joy.* If Elders do not themselves, Practise, and teach the Church to Practise, all things that Christ hath commanded: If Elders be Sloathful and Droniſh, they may not expect the People should highly esteem them in Love; *Mal.* 2. 9. *Therefore have I made you contemptible and base before all the People, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in my love*; If Elders Mat. 23. 4.

ders do not faithfully Advise the Church, if they addict themselves to the pleasing of some particular Men, and do not consult and aim at the general good of the Church; then there is not like to be mutual Peace in the Church.

An Elders carriage in the Church, must be like that of *Mordecaies, Esther* 10. 3. *who was accepted of the multitude of his Brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking Peace to all his seed*; So if an Elder expect to be accepted of his Brethren, he must seek the wealth of his people, and speak peace to all the Flock.

2. *That Peoples Conscientious Discharge of their Duty, is a means to encourage the Elders, to be faithful in their Duty, and it is a means of mutual Peace.* If the People behave themselves proudly and contemptuously against their Elders, if they strive with them, and obstinately resist their Admonitions, and Reproofs, they will weaken their Hands, and sink their Spirits, and give occasion for Strife and Division in the Church. For consider how great a matter a little fire kindleth: But if the People carry it lovingly to their Elders, and say, *Thine are we, peace be to thee, and to thy helpers, for thy God helpeth thee*; then shall the Elders succeed in their Work and Labour; having a free access to the Spirits of their People; then shall all offence and occasion of Division be greatly prevented.

3. *Mutual Peace doth in an eminent manner, tend to help the Elders in the discharge of their Duty, and help the People in the discharge of their Duty.* Peace doth promote all Godliness, and all Honesty, and doth promote the Edification of all, *Rom.* 14. 19. *Let us therefore follow after the things that make for Peace, and things wherewith one may edifie another.* And in *Cap.* 15. *v.* 2. *Let every one please is Neighbour, for his good to Edification: Behold, how pleasant, and good a thing it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity; there the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore, Psal.* 133. But if a Spirit of Division doth prevail in a Church, then the Devil gets Advantage, to hinder the good success of the Ministry, to obstruct the Elders in doing their Duty, who cannot live comfortably, nor labour industriously, if they be in a fire, and a flame of Division; and the Devil gets advantage also, to alienate the People from their Duty, and to bring all Mischief into the Church, *James* 3. 14 *If ye have bitter envyings and strifes in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the Truth; for where envy*

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and ſtrife is, there is confuſion, and every evil work, Verſe 16. *If ye bite and devour one another, take heed leſt ye be conſumed one of another*, Gal. 5. 15. I have ſhewed you ſhortly the Truth of the Doctrine.

And I would only repeat the Exhortation; be you then exhorted, *I beſeech you, Brethren, to undiſſembled love, and unfeigned Peace*; let Love be the Principle, and let Holineſs be the Bond of Peace among you: Hear how pathetically the *Apoſtle* preſſeth the Exhortation, *Eph.* 4. 1, 2. 3. *I therefore, the Priſoner of the Lord, beſeech you, that ye walk worthy of the calling, wherewith ye are called; with all lowlineſs, and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering; forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.* So in 2 *Philip.* 1. 4. *If there be any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any bowels, and mercies; fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the ſame love, being of one accord, of one mind; let nothing be done through ſtrife or vain-glory; but in lowlineſs of mind; let each eſteem others better than themſelves; look not every Man on his own things; but every Man alſo on the things of others.* Are you Chriſtians? Do you believe this to be the Word of God, that doth contain the Evidences of your Salvation? And can you eaſily forget ſuch pathetical Exhortations? Let not the Elders, nor let, I beſeech you, any of the Brethren, have cauſe to complain: As *Pſalm* 120. 6, 7. *I have long dwelt with them that hate Peace; I am for Peace; but when I ſpeak, they are for War.*

By way of Direction.

1. *Avoid Pride, and an over-weening eſteem of your own Wiſdom and Worth.* Prov. 13. 10. *Only by Pride cometh Contention*; i. e. *Chiefly* and eminently by Pride cometh Contention; and if there is any thing of another cauſe, that cauſeth Contention, yet Pride mingleth therewith, and blows up the Flame more vehemently: Therefore avoid Pride; yea, do you count your ſelves to be nothing. Conſider that Parable *Eccleſiaſt.* 9. 15, 16.

2. *Seek*

2. *Seek not your own Interest and Advantage*; prefer the publick good of the Church, before your own private conveniency, 1 Cor. 10. 24. *Let no Man seek his own, but every one anothers Wealth*; do not insist stifly upon your Right; do not continually resolve that you will not abate a Pin, but be of a yielding Spirit. The Promise of the Land was made to *Abraham*; *but*, saith he to *Lot*, *Let there be no strife, my Brother, between me and thee*, (Gen. 13. 8, 9.) do thou take thy choice; *if thou goest to the right-hand, I will go to the left*, &c. Therefore if you stifly insist upon any thing of your own Will, and Interest, consider that *your Father* Abraham *did not so*.

3. *Be not busie Bodies*, 1 Thess. 4. 11. *That ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business*, φιλοτιμεῖσθαι, *love this Honour*; it is your honour to be quiet; you cannot so easily do your own Business *well*; don't you think it belongs to you, to do the Business of others, and that nothing is *well* done but what you have the ordering of; don't you think that you must be the doers of all. I shall conclude with these two Scriptures; the first in the two Verses following the Text. *We exhort you, Brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all Men. See that none render evil for evil unto any Man: But ever follow that which is good, both among your selves, and to all Men.* And I shall add the other thereunto, and conclude, 2 Cor. 13. 11. *Finally, my Brethren, farewell: Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in Peace; and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.*

The Lord impress this upon all our Hearts.

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